

costs between pharmacies and health plans. But they have morphed into one of the most highly concentrated and least accountable profit centers in the healthcare industry. Over time, these PBMs have been allowed to operate and consolidate their market powers virtually unchecked.

Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial health plans all use PBMs to manage drug benefits. That is more than 260 million American lives.

□ 1100

These pharmacy benefit managers wield enormous power as middlemen on numerous fronts. They choose what drugs are covered and not covered by insurance; they negotiate purchasing deals with drug makers; they determine copays for consumers; they decide which pharmacies are included in prescription plans and which are not; they decide how much pharmacies are reimbursed for the drugs they sell, where, by the way, a lot of pharmacies dispense drugs to a patient, and they are reimbursed less than what they paid for the drug.

In 2020, the top six PBMs handled more than 95 percent of total U.S.-equivalent prescription claims. Curiously, this market power concentration and vertical integration with the insurance carriers was allowed by our Federal Trade Commission over the last 15 years, the very agency whose mission it is to safeguard Americans from concentrated corporate power.

What are the effects on drug spending? Between 2015 and 2018, nearly half of the increase in total brand drug spending went to payers, including PBMs, according to an analysis from Berkeley Research Group.

Such a huge slice of yearly drug spending going to middlemen has catapulted the U.S. PBM market to be valued at more than half a trillion dollars, and that is with a “T”. Analysts see PBMs continuing to prosper in the coming years.

The virtually unchecked powers of PBMs have enabled them to: Number one, charge drug manufacturers hefty rebates for preferred placement on formularies. The higher the list price, the higher the rebates, but no one knows where these rebates go.

Number two is to impose restrictive take-it-or-leave-it contracts with community pharmacists.

Number three is charge community pharmacies outrageous clawbacks or DIR fees, often totally unpredictable, where PBMs claw back or take back moneys they have already reimbursed pharmacies, often weeks or months after a patient transaction. The typical community pharmacy now pays roughly \$81,000 a year in DIR fees, making it all but impossible to set a budget for the future.

These and other business practices happen in relative secrecy with no real oversight. No one is really able to follow the dollars on how and where the money flows; not the payer, not the

pharmacist, and certainly not the patient.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the PBM Accountability Study Act, H.R. 1829, which would have the U.S. Government Accountability Office study the roles PBMs play in drug pricing and spending, their market concentrations, and states of competition. My bill also requires GAO to make recommendations on lowering drug costs, improving transparency, and improving competition in the PBM industry. This is a commonsense, bipartisan bill, and I invite all of my colleagues to cosponsor and help with this important legislation.

I sincerely hope we can work together to include the provisions of this bill and other PBM reforms in any drug-pricing legislation that we consider this year.

CONGRATULATING MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE ON ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mohawk Valley Community College on its historic 75th anniversary this year.

MVCC first opened its doors to students in October of 1946. Back then it was known as New York State Institute of Applied Arts and Science. Since those early days, MVCC has grown tremendously and today boasts more than 6,000 full- or part-time students. MVCC was founded on the principle of adapting its programs to fit the needs of our region, and, boy, they have done that.

It has played an important role in developing our workforce and empowering students to achieve their goals and be of service to our community.

MVCC molds students into leaders and continues to be an incredible institution for our community. It is one of the great 11 colleges and universities in New York's 22nd District.

I want to personally thank President Randy VanWagoner for his leadership and wish MVCC the greatest successes over the next 75 years.

I am grateful to MVCC for all they have done, and for being a college near my neighborhood.

CONGRATULATING CANASTOTA GIRLS FIELD HOCKEY TEAM

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Canastota Girls Field Hockey team, for becoming the New York State section III class C champions after a win this weekend. Way to go girls.

The Canastota Raiders prevailed 3 to 1 against Vernon-Verona-Sherrill in a dramatic battle for the class C championship.

Chance Jaquin, Kory Matteson, and MacKenzie Snyder all scored goals for the Raiders, sealing the victory. The Raiders have now won 11 straight games and will face off against Little Falls for the State playoffs this week.

I am wishing them all the best as they prepare for the championship game this week. I also want to congratulate Vernon-Verona-Sherrill on what I know was a hard-fought season. I wish the best of luck to the girls.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MAJEEDAH RAZZAQ

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, today, I recognize a Binghamton woman who was a larger than life, a fixture at community events, a staple in the very communities that needed her most, and the adopted grandma of kids who looked up to her for advice through adolescence and well into adulthood.

As a life skills coach, Majeedah Razzaq used her own mix of street psychology with a strong dose of rule enforcement, consistency, and most of all, accountability. In her work with Greater Opportunities for Broome, Ms. Razzaq was a fighter for local issues, someone who encouraged and worked for new investments in local communities, investments in the children who needed it most.

As a staple at the city of Binghamton's Community Development Advisory Committee, Ms. Razzaq had a unique ability to sort through the fluff, then address the real issues. Ms. Razzaq lived an amazing life which, unfortunately, was cut short this past winter by COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please join me and the citizens of Broome County, New York, in remembering and honoring Majeedah Razzaq for her years of community service. Binghamton and the Southern Tier were lucky to have such a beautiful person advocating on their behalf.

May God bless her soul.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Living God, our souls thirst for You. In this dry and weary land, we look around for something that can sustain us in these times of complexity and frustration, something that will quench our thirst for righteousness and goodwill. But everything we reach for is a mirage.

In this wilderness, we pray that You would remember us, call us, we who are so thirsty, to come to the water that You so generously offer to slake our

spiritual drought. Our souls are hungry for divine food. Like the manna You provided to Your people so long ago, may the words that come from Your mouth feed us in a way that mere bread cannot.

Open our eyes to the nourishment we do not yet know or find hard to understand. Instruct us in Your way and intensify our faith.

Holy God, You have made us an everlasting covenant. All that You set before us will meet our need. May we incline our ears and come to You. May we hear You, that our souls may live.

We lift up these prayers by the strength Your name provides.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to section 11(a) of House Resolution 188, the Journal of the last day's proceedings is approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. STEEL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. STEEL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

(Mr. HIGGINS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

Despite many advances in cancer diagnosis, care, and treatment, lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths in America today. Screening is key to detecting lung cancer early and can significantly improve survival outcomes. But fewer than five percent of all eligible Americans undergo screening for lung cancer each year.

It is vital that we encourage all those who are eligible to get screened and ensure that receiving screening is as easy as possible. By improving access to screening, we can catch lung cancer early and give patients the best possible hope for beating this terrible disease.

PENNSYLVANIA'S NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, Northeast Pennsylvania is home to a world-class energy industry that is creating prosperity and opportunities for our students, families, and economy. It is one of those things that you must see to believe.

That is why I recently hosted my colleagues from the Western Caucus, Representatives YVETTE HERRELL and Chairman DAN NEWHOUSE, to see firsthand the widespread benefits of Pennsylvania's natural gas industry.

We saw how students are being prepared for good-paying energy jobs at the Lackawanna College's School of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center. We experienced the sheer volume of natural gas production at an active drilling site, the Williams' Potter Compressor Station and Coterra Energy's natural gas wells.

To put Pennsylvania's energy dominance into perspective, one well in Susquehanna County produces as much natural gas as 4,000 wells in West Virginia. This energy means national security, a stronger workforce, and lower energy costs.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues for taking time to see the great work happening in Pennsylvania. We must protect it.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

(Ms. WILD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILD. Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard on a transformative bill that will make a difference in so many people's lives, the Build Back Better Act. And yet, the Democrats who are behind this bill, who have worked on it so hard, have been under a barrage of attack and criticism for being in disarray, for being unable to get it done.

But let me say this: This is how it should be done. We are talking about historic unprecedented investments in our climate, in universal pre-K, in drug pricing, in housing policy. Why would anyone think that that is a bill that should come together quickly?

This is the legislative process. We craft. We read. We edit. We make changes. We read it again—all for the good of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we will get this done and it will be a solid, well-thought-out, beautiful piece of legislation. It will make a real difference in people's lives. Keep the faith.

SUPPLY CHAIN BACKLOGS

(Mrs. STEEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the rising costs and supply chain backlogs that are impacting hardworking families.

Store shelves across the country are empty. Families are facing what is expected to be the most expensive Thanksgiving in history.

Yet, we have heard silence from Congressional Democrats on these issues.

We need to solve these bigger supply chain issues, not double down on failing economic policies that have made life for American businesses and workers harder and more expensive.

Thanks to record inflation levels, households earning the median income have been forced to spend an additional \$175 per month on food, fuel, and housing. These higher costs are making your paychecks worth less.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to fight against these policies that are making life for Americans more expensive.

BUILD BACK BETTER

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, Congress is close to delivering the Build Back Better Act this week containing our most comprehensive social provisions ever.

Build Back Better will afford a plethora of gains our country has long sought—from our first significant action on climate change to urgently addressing the 100,000 teacher shortage as our children are returning to school.

Congress is in the end zone on this bill now, although many of us are still trying to get prescription drug prices done. And Congress is paying for Build Back Better without adding to the deficit—unlike the last administration that gave tax breaks to those least in need.

Mr. Speaker, we will make history with passage of Build Back Better.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

(Mr. CLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, time and again I come to the House floor to highlight the out-of-control spending schemes of the House majority. But sadly, this falls on deaf ears as they continue their efforts to push leftist government-dependency bills through this Chamber.

When will the majority leader realize that there is a real-world impact to their fiscal irresponsibility?

Just this past quarter, the U.S. Gross Domestic Product slowed to a disappointing 2 percent, and real disposable income decreased 5.6 percent, that is after already having decreased 30.2 percent in the second quarter.

On top of all this, inflation has increased every month since Joe Biden was sworn in and prices are at a 13-year high. Gas alone is now averaging \$3.39 a gallon—a 7-year high. With prices rising across the board, the average family is spending \$175 dollars more a month on food, fuel, and housing in Biden's America. That is more than \$2,000 a year.